



# The Clerk's Black History Series

**Debra DeBerry**  
Clerk of Superior Court  
DeKalb County



**Frank Cavalier Braxton, Jr.**

(March 31, 1929 – June 1, 1969)

**"Groundbreaking Cartoon Animator"**



**Frank C. Braxton, Jr.**, was born on March 31, 1929, in Los Angeles, California. As a child, Frank had a talent for drawing and sketching. He spent most of his time with a sketch pad and drawing pencils in his hands sketching images of LA in the 30s and 40s. In 1947, Frank graduated from Manual Arts High School, where he left his mark with school art projects and caricatures of his classmates. After high school he studied art and music at Los Angeles City College.

While at LA College, Frank met a fellow voice lesson student, Ben Washam. Ben was a highly respected senior animator for Warner Brothers. In 1954, Ben approached the studio head, Eddie Selzer, and encouraged him to hire Frank to work in the studio with him - where Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies cartoons were produced. Frank immediately became Ben's apprentice/assistant and later served as a journeyman animator, making him the first and only Black animator working in Hollywood at the time.

In 1956, when Warner Brother shut down for six months to retool, Frank was recommended to Disney Studios where he worked for only 10 days before he was hired as an assistant animator by veteran animator/director Abe Levitow. He then worked with animator Bill Hurtz at Shamus Culhane Productions and later, at Jay Ward Productions. It was during this time that Frank's production work aired on NBC-TV in 1959. His work on popular cartoons, **Peabody's Improbable History** and **The Bullwinkle Show**, was viewed by children everywhere on Saturday Mornings.

In 1960, Frank animated the television cartoon series, **Mr. Magoo**. That same year, he was elected president of the Screen Cartoonist's Guild, making him the first black person to be president of any film union in Hollywood. Four years later, in 1964, he directed **Linus the Lionhearted**.

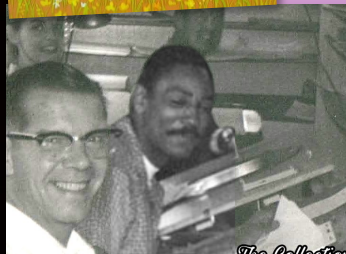
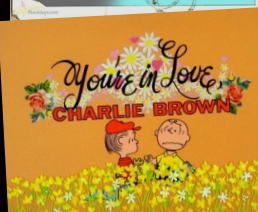
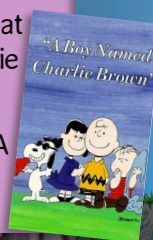
Frank also began teaching animation to inner city youth at the Performing Arts Center of Los Angeles using equipment donated from various studios. Around this same time, Frank was diagnosed with Hodgkin Disease. Just as his career began to peak, his illness limited his ability to work.

In 1968, Frank began working with Bill Melendez Production TV specials like "You're in Love, Charlie Brown" and "He's Your Dog, Charlie Brown". What turned out to be his last project, the feature length "A Boy Named Charlie Brown," was released in 1969, after his death.

On June 1, 1969, Frank Cavalier Braxton, Jr. passed away at UCLA Medical Center from Hodgkin Disease. He was only 40 years old.

In 2019, Frank was posthumously awarded the International Animated Film Association's Winsor McCay Award for his "recognition of lifetime/career contributions to the art of animation". He was also posthumously awarded the "Animation - Annie Awards" for excellence in animation. The award was accepted by his wife, Bette and his two children, Aleta and Scott. Also present at the ceremony were his four grandchildren.

After Frank, many talented Black artists, including Floyd Norman, Leo Sullivan, Richard Allen, Norm Edelen, and Ron Husband followed with impressive careers in the industry.



Frank Braxton Jr. and Ben Washam.